

**Movement and Language**

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

**by**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Christman', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

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## Abstract

The public sphere has been a steadfast foundation on which human relation has relied on for centuries. Just as the salons of the French revolution served as an interactive exhibition of art, expression, and opinions, the poetry and prose readings of today allow for people with common interests to share their thoughts and creative works in an open and receptive setting. For my Honors Thesis project, I chose to integrate my two fields of study (performance art and writing) and use them as a theme for a salon-inspired poetry and prose reading. Writers (myself included) who participate in other performance-based art such as theater, music, and film read creative works centered rooted in this theme. Here, writers and performers were able to exhibit their work, as well as meet and converse with those whose interests were similar to their own. A hard copy of these read poems and prose was compiled, as well as a video of the event in full.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Professor Jill Christman for advising me throughout this project. Not only did she assist me with all aspects of this extensive project, but she also served as a mentor and trusted friend throughout my college career.

Many thanks as well to Sarah Mangelsdorf, who helped me in spreading the word of my project to the Ball State Theatre and Dance Department.

I would also like to thank Rachel Dickson and Laura Janiga for their encouragement and great help in setting up my Honors Thesis event.

Thanks as well to the readers who participated in the event: Carolyn Barry, Jeremy Bauer, Jessica Bluemke, Anthony Cleveland, and Ryan Rader.

I would also like to thank Mckenna Kemp, Kyle Broyles, and Steven Wilcox for helping me document this very important project through the designing of my chapbook, filming of the event, and capturing the event through pictures.

### **Movement and Language: Author's Statement**

I think the moment I realized it was this: at the end of my biggest dance role—the peak of my young dance career—during the dead silence before the last number, I fell down a flight of stairs. I was descending my throne, and one satin-slipped foot tumbled after the other, while my Nutcracker prince scrambled to pick me up. I did get up—I dusted myself off and smiled all through the Waltz of the Flowers. My friends danced close to me, and when their backs faced the audience, they'd mouth "Don't cry! You're fine! Please don't cry!" But, no part of me really wanted to cry. I was glad the show was almost over, and in such a state of shock that nothing could touch me. "This would make a really great story," I thought to myself.

That's when I knew I was a writer.

For the past few years, I've been steadily building on these two loves of mine, dance and writing. They've both been my steadfast creative outlets. I've become happily lost in them both. I've both danced and written my way to a cathartic bliss. I've chosen both of them as my professional paths of study. When it came time to think about a possible Honors Thesis topic, I knew that I wanted to somehow focus on and entwine these two passions of mine. I also wanted my project to be relevant and relatable to other students; I wanted people to participate with me in a combined effort to express this merging of two artistic loves.

The political and literary salons of the French Enlightenment were, according to scholar Jurgen Habermas, of great historical importance, and served as a necessary creative outlet for the intellectuals stifled by idle aristocracy (Habermas, Crossley, and Roberts 49). I had always heard of salons, but I never likened them to anything of my own time. I had a vague notion that I could do a poetry and prose reading for my Honors Thesis Creative Project, and so I went to Dr. Emert for approval and advice.



After explaining this rough idea—how I had attended poetry and prose readings all throughout college, and how I was striving for a way to connect this exhibition with dance somehow, Dr. Emert excitedly piped in with:

“Oooh, like a French Salon!”

Dr. Emert then proceeded to help me build on this idea. I concluded that while I wanted to focus heavily on dance and writing (I had the initial idea of inviting students from the Dance Department to read things they had written about dance), it would be best if I opened up the possibility of more diverse subject matter that was to be read. After all, the salons didn’t limit themselves to discussions and exhibitions of only one art form. Instead, they sought to aim for what Horace aimed for in his poetry—that is, “either to please or to educate” (Habermas, Crossley, and Roberts 2).

And so it was decided that I would hold a salon-inspired poetry and prose reading that would involve any students who wished to share their creative writing on any type of performance art. I spoke with Dr. Emert at length about how challenging it is to translate one passion to another. For me, dancing is a body experience completely unlike anything else I’ve done—it’s hard for me to describe the thoughts running through my head, the way I make my limbs expectant of upcoming movement, or how cathartic it is to dance a piece of choreography to its fullest. Writing about dance is a fun challenge for me, and I feel like I’m giving my audience something particularly personal and almost holy. As I talked about this with Dr. Emert, we discussed how this is probably true for most performance arts—music, drama, singing, etc. So why not propose this challenge to students who partake in these arts and allow them, too, to share something precious with everyone?

The next step was to find an advisor. This was easy; Jill Christman had been my most influential Creative Writing professor, and seemed to take a personal investment in every bit of work her students produced. She also had plenty of experience with planning readings within the English Department, involving both students and important visiting writers. I contacted her about this project, and she was more than happy to guide me along.

My first real step for this Creative Project was probably the hardest: finding writers in the many performance-art fields who would be willing to volunteer. I met with my dance advisor, Sarah Mangelsdorf, and she sent out mass emails to the Theatre and Dance Department students here at Ball State. I also had the same done for the Creative Writing students. I visited a few dance classes and made announcements about my salon reading, and tried to spread the word to a few dance professors. I also made flyers in hopes to garner some attention as well. My goal was around 6 readers; my advisor, Jill Christman, said that this was a safe number for a reasonably-timed reading (I was shooting for my event to last roughly an hour). Surprisingly enough, acquiring this golden number of performance-artists/writers was easier through word of mouth throughout the small but tight writing community that I'm a part of at Ball State. While I was busy trying desperately to get the attention of any dance students who are also interested in writing, I failed to realize that many of my writer-friends were involved in other various arts were eager to help me out.

In the end, I secured exactly six readers, including myself. The line-up seemed tight and diverse (one student who wrote of her Musical Theater experience, one student who wrote about playing the saw as an instrument, another musician who wrote about playing rock music as well as poetry as a performance-art, one student who wrote about his inspiration behind filmmaking, one former dancer who wrote about a concert experience, and me, writing about dance). I was



excited that so many art forms seemed to be represented in this line-up, and I was sure that everyone in the audience would find something to identify with and remember.

The next step in finalizing my event was planning the structure and details of the salon reading. I had a vague idea of what I needed to be thinking of—refreshments, venue, promoting, etc. This was all slightly daunting, though, since I had never single-handedly organized an event in my life—not even a birthday party. Jill Christman pointed me in the right direction, noting that coffee and cookies were always a good standby for literary events, and added that punch would be a nice touch. So, I visited the Honors House (where, in the very beginning, Dr. Emert suggested I should hold my salon reading), checked out what sort of kitchen equipment I would be able to use, and trekked to the grocery for the necessary supplies.

The rest of the planning consisted of small details that were fairly easy to put into place. I borrowed a music stand from a professor for the readers to use as a podium. I met again with Jill and with her graduate assistant, Ellie, to run through the checklist they use when visiting authors come to Ball State to read. This was particularly helpful, and I was glad to see that I had pretty much thought of everything.

What I had failed to really focus on, though, was the writing I planned on reading for the salon. I had gotten so caught up in the technical aspects of this project, that I didn't devote very much time or thought to my contribution to the salon. I rifled through some of my old writings, locked down at the library for a night or two, and got to work. Thankfully, I was able to pump out a poem and a short essay, both about my dance experiences.

The day of the salon came, and I was a mad ball of anxiety. My wonderful roommates, Rachel and Laura, talked me off my ledge of nervousness throughout the day, and helped me transport my bags upon bags of supplies to the Honors House an hour before the event was to

begin. It was a surprisingly warm April day—the sun was shining, I had a new flowered sundress on, my readers were excited and supportive, and all was ready to go.

Only, there was one small problem: the door to the Honors House was locked. At first I didn't panic—maybe I had arrived a little too early. My roommates and I waited outside patiently. Then, we started to get a little worried. The unseasonably ruthless sun beat down on us as we sat on the sidewalk outside the house. My sherbet for the punch was melting. I began to get a little worried, so I called the University Information line to try and get a hold of a custodian—anyone!—who could maybe let us in. No avail. I left a shaky and frantic voicemail on Jill's phone. The readers began to show up, and I was close to hyperventilation. They all reassured me, saying hopeful things like “We could do the reading outside, in the sun!” Sweet, but I was still panicking.

Ah, but, glory, hallelujah! One of the folks who had shown up and was waiting outside with us found a far side door to the house that was unlocked. I breathed a sigh of sweet relief and shuffled my supplies through the door, only to be greeted by alarms. *Loud* alarms. Things were only getting better. I drug my melting sherbet and bags of food to the kitchen, ignored the alarms, and decided to tackle one crisis at a time—the snack table needed to be set up pronto. My friends and I frantically set things up, and thankfully when the campus police arrived, they were understanding and quickly turned the alarm off.

And then the salon got rolling. I can honestly say that the reading went absolutely according to plan. Everyone did a fantastic job reading their works, and all of the guests had a seemingly great time visiting before and after the readings. I was thankful to have a couple of friends to film the whole thing, as well as document the event through photographs. Jill counted heads right before the readings began, and around 40 guests came, which thrilled me to no end. I



was almost overwhelmed by the great reception I kept getting from all of the guests—and to think I was worried just an hour before that it would all fall apart! I think the defining moment of the event came at the end of the evening, when Jill and I were laughing about my panicking. “You should write about this! Really!” she said. I had been thinking the exact same thing. And so the night reaffirmed what I had known all along: this is what I loved to do. I’m a writer, and I write about what is important to me.

Part of what made the salons and coffeehouses of the French Renaissance so successful were the subsequent publications made from the famous discussions and exhibitions of art and literature (Habermas, Crossley, and Roberts 4). I thought I could put a modern spin on these leaflets and make a chapbook, or small, homemade book, out of the pieces my readers presented at my salon reading. With the help of a design-savvy friend, I made several copies of “Movement and Language,” and gave two to each reader. I had just done the project for fun and as a small thank you to the readers, but I didn’t expect the sweet responses I received upon giving the chapbooks out. Each writer was honored to be published and extremely grateful, which just made me so much more appreciative of the invaluable experience this project gave me. I usually err on the side of humility, but I’ll go on and say that I was ultimately very proud of how my salon turned out. I am so glad to have found a project that was relevant and applicable to other students who loved what I loved—I’m certain that I’m not the only one who benefited from this event. I think the talented readers and I successfully found the artistic voice I’d been striving to find for years. Our words captured what our art felt like and what it meant to us, and our fellowship through this project helped us find a singular creative voice that was rooted in our two varying artistic notions.

## Works Cited

Habermas, Jürgen, Nick Crossley, and John Roberts. *After Habermas*. Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2004. Print.



# MOVEMENT AND LANGUAGE

**A Performance-Art  
based Poetry and  
Prose Reading**

**Wednesday, April 14  
7:30pm  
At the Honors House  
on Riverside, next to  
Music Building**



**Refreshments will be available during reading!**

**Enter the Raffle to win tickets to a Ball State  
Theatre and Dance Production!**



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**ME**

**NT**



**LANGUAGE**

# MOVEMENT & LANGUAGE

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## ANTHONY CLEVELAND

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### Porch Stories

For my next and last question I paused to decide if I should ask him or not. He could tell what the question was, because of how hesitant I appeared.

"Did you ever see anyone die?" He nodded, and continued the story in the same sincere tone as the previous stories.

"After we took hill two fifty-five, our division was to go replace the seventh infantry division on Porkchop Hill. A buddy of mine just got a gold wristwatch in the mail from his mom that day. It was his birthday present from home. He spent the whole day showing off that watch. He joked with us by flashing it in our faces and asking us to ask him 'what time is it?'

"They were still pulling the dead and wounded chincs off the hill in stretchers. My buddy with the new watch was right behind me as we went up the hill. "Hey Ed do you know what time it is?" I rolled my eyes and turned to say something back to him -

--the only thing I saw was him jump off the steep side of the hill clutching something to his chest. Instead of hearing him hit the ground, we heard the sound of a grenade go off. The platoon rushed down the hill to him. I yelled out, 'What happened!' Another buddy of mine yelled back, 'goddamned chinc on the stretcher pulled the pin on a grenade! He saw the chinc do it, he took it from him and jumped off the hill!' When we finally made it to the bottom of the hill, the only thing we found was his hand with his gold wristwatch still on it."



This is one of my grandpa's stories I can never shake. I wish I asked my grandpa what the soldier's name was that jumped off the hill with the grenade. Years later I still regret not doing that.

My grandpa always answered my questions, whatever they may be. I haven't thought about this until now, but I was the only grandkid that spent that much time with him. I was also the only grandkid to be interested in his stories. I feel very honored he shared these stories with me, and maybe now I feel like I need to share his stories with others. I do believe my interest in story telling started there with my grandfather. His stories became fuel for my imagination and the inspiration to share them.

CAROLYN BARRY

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## To Be, Or Not To Be? The Life of A Musical Theatre Major

Sing.

Dance.

Act.

Scratch that.

We never act. We simply *are*.

You must learn how to be.

A little voice in my head mutters,

"Your parents are paying out of state tuition for you to learn how to  
"be."

Sing.

Dance.

Be.

Dance.

Your turn out isn't great.

Your dancing has actually gotten worse since you've been at school.

Shut up, shut up, negativity.

Well that's what they tell us.

Our professors and teachers and mentors and friends.

Wipe out ALL of the negativity in your life.

That's the only way to survive this major.

This business.

Okay, so should I wipe out my mother?

How about the extra ten pounds?

How about the voice in my head that says, "You'll never be a  
successful performer."

Wipe it out?

Wipe you out.

Sorry, but I really don't have time for a boyfriend right now.

But maybe I'll make room for you?

"So you're a theatre major?"

"Musical Theater, yeah."

"That just must be so much fun!"

I want to say, "It is fun."

Because it IS.

I mean, how many other college students get to do what they love to do DURING class?

Everyday I get to perform for someone.

That is such a gift that I take for granted.

In three years when I'm out there trying to make it performing for *anyone* will be a rare treat.

So yes, it IS fun.

But it's a ton of hard work too.

How many other college students have to analyze themselves as a person for their homework?

"Your homework is to live one day where you're simply in the moment. No ipods to distract you. No facebook. Simply *be*. Pay attention to what is happening around you."

Our homework is to also not get sick.

You get sick, you get a cold.

You get a cold, you get mucus in your throat.

You get mucus in your throat, you get mucinex  
apple cider vinegar, a humidifier, and honey sticks,  
and pray to God you can sing on Monday.

Shower, or food?

Social life, or furthering yourself as an artist?

Shakespeare homework, or work on your cockney dialect for the show, "My Fair Lady."

Weeks of stress and practice and strain and worrying and  
practice

and practice



and practice  
all leading up to that single audition.

"Do they like me?  
My hair is too frizzy today.  
I shouldn't have worn these shoes.  
God, I sound awful.  
Shouldn't have eaten that peanut butter sandwich two hours ago.  
Why am I thinking about peanut butter sandwiches while I'm  
singing?  
Don't think about that, think about the singing!  
NO!  
DON'T think about the singing, just think about the acting!  
That's the only way to have a believable performance.  
Don't think about the voice.  
Just tell a story.  
...Tell the fricken' story.  
Tell the *thirty second* story that determines the next eight weeks of  
my life,  
Determines whether or not the department considers me "talented"  
or "valuable" or "worth their time"  
Determines if my parents are proud and happy to be paying for my  
education,  
Determines how I feel about myself.  
Okay... thank you!"

So did they like me?  
I got a call back.  
Maybe I CAN do this.  
Cast lists go up.  
I'm on it.  
Great.  
Now what?  
I'll tell you what:  
Eight weeks of four-hour rehearsals, six days a week.

Don't get me wrong.  
I'm NOT complaining.  
I just have a few other things to do:  
Practice piano.  
Practice sight-singing.  
Practice for your voice lessons.  
Practice for auditions.  
Print off your sheet music.  
Do your design awareness project about costumes and lighting.  
Finish your seven-page core class paper.  
Somehow find time to work out.  
Memorize a Shakespearian monologue.  
"Oh splendor of sunburst breaking forth this day  
Where on I lay my hands once more on Helen my wife.  
and yet it is not so much as men think  
for the woman's sake I came to Troy  
but against that guest prove treacherous  
who, like a robber, carried the woman  
from my house!"  
Now I need you to perform this monologue while sprinting up and  
down six flights of stairs in Pruis hall, all while learning how to  
"breathe low" and you BETTER NOT become winded. Ready class?  
Go!

Day in and day out  
all my friends and I can do is laugh.  
We sacrifice so much to do this.  
We're not "normal" students.  
We're "artists."  
(Or at least we like to think we are.)  
I don't have time to fall in love.  
I don't have time to feel much of anything.  
And I certainly don't have time for a break up.  
I'm slowly learning to condition myself to feel one love for now.  
Just one love.

Because maybe that's all I can handle.  
Maybe my love for what I do is what will get me through this day.  
This crazy day.  
Just like the rest of them.  
All coming and flying at me one by one  
until they smear into a gray timeless haze  
that slides into my future.  
And yet-  
Freshman year flew by.  
And this year seems like a shameless wink  
flicked at an unsuspecting girl in a hurry.  
I love my friends  
and I love my school  
and I love my work  
and I love to learn  
and grow  
and write  
and figure myself out.  
I love performing.  
I love helping people forget about the drama in their own lives by  
letting them watch the drama on the stage.  
I love being someone else's escape  
while being in my own.  
I love to inspire  
and feel  
and just be.  
And as quickly as this all started, I know it will end.  
College will be gone, and I won't be able to perform everyday.  
But hey-  
Maybe I'll find some extra time to,  
Oh, I don't know... shower?  
Actually form some kind of beneficial and tangible relationship?  
But I will miss this,  
and I will miss my friends,  
and I will miss my new found home.



when any sound at all was gonna emerge, and if any did it was short lived and airy, like the coo of a sleeping child.

The day came when I got real, feelin' it in the throat and loins sound, but before that came the dream. I was in some green pasture with lots of hills like bowling balls. It looked like home, but exaggerated. You couldn't see the stars past all the storm clouds and the only clue that it was a world where humanity existed was old shack, wooden and weathered by the universe gray, and a saw at the top of the centermost hill. It was standing on its own, and though it was a certain distance away that seemed to bend time, I knew I could never reach it, and so I stood in the sloppy grass only moving to wipe the cold rainwater from my eyes.

This world was hard-gripped by a storm and there was all the thunder and lightning and needle rain of Tornado Alley weather, but in this oldest form of chaos I only felt peace. There was a sound that cut through the elements. It was shrill but elegant, and hard to describe, but it was like soft afghans or if lace could be converted to sound waves. With every gust of wind the saw on the hill would give a little wave and conjure a glow above it. The glow was small, a miniature aurora borealis, blue like sky electricity with faint traces of white—small accents that would spike when the alien notes spread through the landscape. The dream seemed to last a whole night, as if the whole eight or so hours I was asleep was needed for the experience sink in. As if it needed to be embedded in my blood and muscles, in the wrinkles of my brain and whatever else makes a human feel more than the world.

I awoke with my brain feeling all zap-zap-zap and serene in some kind of strange harmony. It was a feeling like religion, but without this God I've heard about since I could hear. There was a oneness with everything, like I was my own axis mundi, like I could feel molecules in the air if I really paid

attention, like I could see anything I wanted to and no force could be invisible, like I could start talking in pictures instead of words like my brain had been doing for awhile, I mean like projecting images with my thoughts and maybe there'd still be sound, but it would be music, not like lyrics, just music. Just idea holograms and music, and when I picked up my saw I got my first sustained note and a feeling like I'd finally had something I could count on to stick around all my life.

It isn't like many other instruments when you're first learning it, because when you have the handle of a handsaw between your knees with the teeth facing your sternum and you're trying like hell to run this stringed stick against the other side, you know you look just bird-shit dumb if nothing happens. A guitar still looks like a guitar and sounds like a guitar when you're starting out, and a trumpet the same, it's just more annoying to hear than anything. But when I finally got that sound and could match pitches with people, thread notes between those of others and their instruments, there is almost a feeling of purpose.

I'm in this band called Bonesetters and I had to tell them that I couldn't sing and play the saw at the same time. Somehow it replaces my voice, and like I said I feel the thing in my throat and in my lungs, and there's something about the oneness feeling I get from it where I feel like some sort of conduit, and for what I don't know. I just know it feels like how people describe souls and it feels like being a cloud in the atmosphere. It feels like the breakdown of everything, elements, molecules, atoms. It feels like a big fuckin' bang, or whatever stars feel like in their burning. It almost feels like I am my own universe.

## Untitled

I went to a concert the other day  
Of a man I had never heard of  
And it felt like going to the Mass  
Of some religion that I don't buy into.  
This man, this demigod  
Jumped off the stage to be one with his people,  
His followers  
And fifty men  
Stood around him in a respectful,  
Perfect circle.  
They knew everyone of his hymns,  
Swayed as he strummed  
And wouldn't be more reverent  
If he could cure lepers with his guitar.  
I got that same feeling I got  
Each of the four times I've attended church  
Politely watching everyone else  
Moved by this strange ritual.  
It made me think that  
If I practiced my guitar everyday  
Instead of letting it sit prettily in a corner  
Maybe these men would worship me, too.  
All I need is three chords, a dozen couplets  
And some deciples standing in a respectful,  
Perfect circle  
Around me.

## Dance Rants

1.

I'm not sure if it mattered more or less when I was sixteen, when the plaster and wood tipped my feet up like just nothing at all. The role of my young dancing life was in my flippant lap—they would have chosen someone better had there been someone. There were frosty cross-state trips to meet with my partner, a thirty-something year old Cuban man with triangular hair and a loose grip on the English language, especially when he was frustrated. His stiff hands spinning my torso in the dim studio—I remember him walking away and shaking his head at a complete loss of language. I didn't cry; instead I stood and focused on my burning red ears. Why the ears? What sense does that make?

When I fell down the stairs in the final number of the final performance in front of God and everyone all packed in to the auditorium, I didn't cry either. My friends bourree-ed across the stage, turned to face me and mouthed "IT'S ALRIGHT DON'T CRY JUST DON'T CRY." Why would I cry? This dumb thing was almost over. My feet and ribs were tired.

2.

My grandmother kept a picture from that performance in her assisted living home. I was standing in passé, actually marking a turn that was supposed to be with Roberto. The R.A.s always



mentioned how nice it was of my dance company to allow "a cripple" such a role.

3.

Once I danced my way to Costa Rica. We got there and bought cheap purses and shell bracelets that were held together by cheap glue. The city was crowded and rusty and hot but past the city limits, it all looked like a tropical, hazy Scotland. Emerald knolls and low clouds. In the rainforest we zip-lined across the canopy like squealing dragonflies, awkward and amazed.

The last night of the trip we performed on a rickety stage. In the attic dressing room, we fanned ourselves and talked over the traffic pouring from the open windows. Being the sweet Southern girls we were, we stood in a circle to pray to the Most Precious Lamb of God our Lord and Savior. We asked our choreographer, a weird guy with a weird stare, if he wanted to pray with us. He said no, that he didn't pray. Then he stood up and joined us in the circle, and bowed his head with the rest of us. That night we pushed our bodies through the humid air like the Macaws above the canopy, and stole beers from the hotel bar like our feet wouldn't remember the breeze all that way up high.

4.

My grip on the ballet barre has always been a tight, hateful one. My body twists from the shiny wooden thing like it's the exact opposite polarization. But I push right back—you will not conquer me yet, cold slab of oak. I've come this far.

5.

My favorite place is behind the heavy curtain—the quiet pacing before the overture, the “merde, merde merde merde!” whispered as the house lights dim. The heaving of your chest and your sweaty palms in the sweaty palms of everyone else, waiting to take two steps up, raise your arms in a quivering wave of limbs, and bow, hold, and up. Smiles cracking your red lips. Your feet pulsating. Your family waiting with roses like you were some Broadway star, not a corps Waltz of the Flowers ballerina in Owensboro, Kentucky. The curtain doesn’t know, so what does it matter? All it knows is expectation, the screams that are hushed as it lowers, and everyone being the prima, tears in her black eyes, glitter dripping from her tutu.

## Reverance

I've always loved the final bow  
at the end of every ballet class,  
throat dry and  
knees twitching under the pale nylon and  
finally  
the sweat on my neck is cooling, finally  
and a breath  
The swooping catch in my arm—I  
make sure to exhale deep and turn over my palm with  
the slightest of gesture, but it's there:  
"thank you, you  
silver, strange version of myself—my audience—thank  
you, really I mean it and I'll be graceful to make up for that heaving,  
botched-all-to-hell petite allegro  
for you  
but only just now  
please please and  
yes yes and ahhhh."  
And the piano keys fold in on themselves—all of this  
gratitude, my God, the music, and THANK YOU ALL!  
Somewhere in the breathing folds of the curtain  
Elton John and Margot Fonteyn are laughing and clapping  
and looking at each other saying, "we did it,  
they did it, lookit now we've all just DONE IT" and  
big fat tears would sit in their eyes, making the whole thing look like  
the most beautiful Degas disaster you've ever seen.  
Thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you  
thank you  
don't mention it.

## **Rectangles, Sonnets, Rectangles...**

When writing a series of information  
in numerically based grids, I satisfy  
a wholly human urge, only to realize  
it folds itself into squares. So do I.  
I create nothing but squares, squares  
From when I was raised and now live.  
I was raised on the square! I thrive  
on the glowing rectangular frontier!  
But the planet is a sphere. Gravity  
rained knives on each side of my square,  
collapsing the edges, ripping, tearing  
it into nameless, shapeless entities  
  
and then into a circle, the perfect thing.  
I need to know God, madness, everything.

## **Be Profound**

"Be profound" I told her  
in hopes she would comply  
but I neglected,  
and much projected,  
"Go to hell" she replied



## Old Poem

The pain in his left leg spikes. His cane is made from the roots of oak trees and bound with vines. His beard has lost all traces of red. Old poem drives a buick and eats at Bob Evans once a week. Old poem wishes you would call more. Old poem voted for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Gene Kelly makes Old poem feel uncomfortable warm. Old poem thinks this soup is too hot. He bought this blanket at Target on sale. Old poem can't believe you're going out dressed like that. Old poem needs some time to make up his mind. Old poem refrigerates everything he owns. Old poem has lived infinity forever, uphill, both ways. Old poem is lonely because every other poem he knows is dying. Old poem wants to read you a poem. It's about a poem, but it's really about any poem. Old poem doesn't want to shop for his own casket. Old poem doesn't need glasses to see you could use a lesson in manners. Old poem is going to sleep, so shut up.

## Self-Portrait at 21

Today I pound the pavement like it owes me.  
I own this sun-bleaches concrete bridge  
The river is flooded and dirty.  
I own that too.  
I walk past a Laundromat of annoyed people.  
Even the sidewalks have potholes.  
Someone asks me where to get drugs.  
I get all my drugs at the bank.  
I tell them I have no idea.  
I buy things with money,  
I trade things for things,

I draw circles in the fogged bathroom  
mirror over my eyes and mouth  
I saw a metaphor all twisted up  
on the side of the road like a deer,  
but not a deer, but like a deer,  
and I wanted to help but couldn't.  
I drew circles on her eyes too.  
I saw children pelting each other with crabapples  
and keeping secrets from each other.  
Maybe I'll eat a birthday cake for lunch  
and gag on the ridiculous amount of icing.  
I want to wave my arms around  
and hope no one notices  
because I just like the way it feels.  
I'm a helicopter trapped inside a fat person.  
I've written my fair share of greeting cards,  
but they're selling like hotcakes,  
and I'm selling hotcakes too.  
I think of Atlas, the world on his shoulders.  
I think about doing more push-ups in the morning.  
I always wanted to be a painter  
but my hand trembles when I hold the brush.  
A construction worker submerging his hands  
beneath a river of sewage as the sun goes down  
I leave before seeing what he brings up.  
My house is split in two,  
but I live in the better half.  
My friends are in my living room.  
They ask me how my day was.  
I draw circles over their eyes and laugh.

## Untitled

lets start a band  
lets start the greatest band ever  
lets start a band that gets naked every night  
and gets dressed every morning  
lets name the band after a dead celebrity  
lets name the band after your mom  
lets name the band "Your Mom"  
Your Mom will need instruments.  
Lets buy them  
No, lets steal them  
lets burn them  
and watch the split coils and humbuckers  
pop and meld with the maple necks  
lets burn our telecasters and kickdrums  
so we can steal them again  
we'll get a van  
a home for our instruments  
and people we pick up  
on the street  
we'll pick up everyone  
we have nothing to give  
neither do they  
our van will have to be a big van  
a van for all our flaming instruments  
and heated arguments  
there will be fights  
someone will get punched  
for crossing some line  
but never in the van  
because it could explode  
and we don't know  
how to change a tire  
or spend money wisely

I'll need your help:  
teach me a D chord  
it's the rock and roll note  
and after I've bent that note  
every way it could bend  
teach me A minor  
because it is frail

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LESLIE NANCE



# MOVEMENT & LANGUAGE



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compiled by Leslie Nance

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**A collection of works focusing  
on the theme of performance art.**

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